DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 473 253 SP 041 366

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TITLE	Sociocultural Issues in Education: Implications for Teachers.
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (55th, New Orleans, LA, January 24-27, 2003).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Consciousness Raising; *Cultural Pluralism; *Diversity (Student); Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Multicultural Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Racial Bias; Racial Discrimination; *Sociocultural Patterns

ABSTRACT

Exclusion, hatred, and injustice have caused much pain in U.S. society. Teacher educators are faced with a formidable challenge as they strive to present equality of opportunity through education. In order to meet the needs of a diverse student population, teachers must be able to recognize, understand, and celebrate differences. Incorporating the elements of action research, this study examined multiple forms of data gathered from primarily Caucasian practicing teachers enrolled in a Master's level multicultural education course that explored sociocultural topics, issues, and trends. Data included meta-comment papers, audio recordings of classroom discussion sessions, and reflective and interactive meta-comment journal entries recorded by the practicing teachers with regard to readings, topics, issues, and trends. Findings from the study were utilized to inform and/or improve current practices within participants' classrooms, to assist them in better meeting the needs of their own diverse student populations, and to inform and/or improve current practices within the Master's level multicultural education course itself. Two appendixes present student essays entitled "Reflections from the Ivory Tower" and "Reflections from a WASP." (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

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ED 473 253

AACTE CONVENTION, January, 2003
New Orleans, LA

Title of Session: *Sociocultural Issues in Education: Implications for Teachers*

Type of Session: Poster Session

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ABSTRACT

Exclusion, hatred, and injustice have caused much pain in our society. Teacher educators are faced with a formidable challenge as they strive to present equality of opportunity through education to students. In order to meet the needs of a diverse student population, teachers must be able to recognize, understand, and celebrate differences. Incorporating the elements of action research, this study attempted to examine multiple forms of data gathered from primarily Caucasian practicing teachers enrolled in a Master's level multicultural education course that explored sociocultural topics, issues, and trends. Data included meta-comment papers, audio recordings of classroom discussion sessions, and reflective and interactive meta-comment journal entries recorded by the practicing teachers with regard to readings, topics, issues, and trends. Findings from the study were utilized to inform and/or improve current practices within the classrooms of the participants and to assist them in better meeting the needs of their own diverse student populations, and also to inform and/or improve current practices within the Master's level multicultural education course itself.

The Process of Exploration of Sociocultural Issues in Education – Why?

Numerous scholars and researchers are exploring the complex, multidisciplinary, and often-controversial field of multicultural education. Educators such as James Banks (2002, 2001), Sonia Nicto 2000), Christine Bennett (1999), Gary Shank (2002), and Joel Spring (2001) are asking questions that have been thought of many times but left unasked and thus unanswered for many years. Conversation is encouraged regarding culture, class, ethnicity and race, equality and social justice, prejudice, discrimination, gender, exceptionality, language diversity, religion, and other issues impacting twentieth century classrooms and lives of twentieth century students and teachers within those classrooms. Teachers and students alike are expanding monocultural views of history and everyday happenings including an increase in awareness with regard to heretofore-unconscious prejudices. As pointed out by Anna Deavere Smith in her introduction to *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (1994), "Few people speak of a language about race that is not their own. If more of us could actually speak from another point of view, like speaking another language, we could accelerate the flow of ideas."

Sonia Nieto (*Affirming Diversity*, 2000) once wrote, "Multicultural education cannot be understood in a vacuum. Yet in many schools it is approached as if it were divorced from the policies and practices of schools and from society." If our teachers are to meet the needs of our pluralistic student population, teachers must be able to recognize, understand, and celebrate differences. In addition they must design curriculum that infuses multicultural core values and goals (Banks, 2002; Bennett, 1999). In our multicultural education course this semester we explored sociocultural topics, characteristics of diversity, issues, and trends relevant to the classroom lives of practicing teachers and their diverse student populations. We also investigated, on a personal as well as academic level, our racial, ethnic, and religious identities, and these same identities for others. We looked into our own lives and the lives of others using ethnography-based tools such as personal interviews with family members and others, research focusing on different culture groups, guided readings including a set of autobiographical literature titles focusing on different culture groups including short stories and novels, reflective and

interactive meta-comment journal entries, reaction papers, discussion and dialoging, selected videos, web site exercises, and a culminating meta-comment paper written using reflective journal entries recorded over the course of the semester as data to inform this culminating essay.

The Process of Exploration of Sociocultural Issues in Education – Questions for the Study

The following questions were utilized as a framework for the ethnography-based approach to the multicultural course and resulting study:

1. How do people relate to others from diverse populations and what are the main concerns facing people across the mid-south,
2. How do practicing teachers relate to students from diverse populations and what are the main concerns facing teachers across the mid-south,
3. After research, guided readings, other class-related activities noted above, and reading and discussing a set of literature titles focusing on different culture groups, would teachers be able to view their "classroom" world and the world in general through a lens of multiple perspectives,
4. Would the interactions, activities, reflections, dialoging, and discussions assist teachers in better meeting the needs of their own diverse student populations in particular and their society in general?

The Process of Exploration of Sociocultural Issues in Education – Our Approach

Naturalistic inquiry provides data that is rich in description of people, places, and conversations and also involves understanding behavior from the subject's own frame of reference in order to investigate topics in all their complexity. Sometimes materials that the subjects write themselves are used as data. This material presents rich descriptions of what the people who wrote the materials think about their experiences and contexts. These personal documents, first-person narratives, describe an individual's actions, experiences, and beliefs. They reveal a person's view of experiences (Allport, 1942; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The researcher collects them to "obtain details as to how social situations appear to actors in them and what meanings various factors have for the participants" (Angell, 1945, p. 178). Advantages noted in Bogdan and Biklen (1992) for soliciting reflective journals are that the researcher can have some hand in directing the author's focus and thereby get the participants in the study to write on similar topics from their own different, unique perspectives. As a result, subjects can provide reflective journal entries documenting what they are experiencing, thinking, and feeling. These may serve as important sources of data to guide the inquirer in analysis and understanding.

As discussed in Clandinin and Connelly (2000), entries made by the participants in meta-comment journals enable the inquirer to create a "field text" as a tool for interpreting the stories told by participants and to gain insight into the concerns, feelings, perceptions, and needs of these participants. As Spradley (1979) says, researchers should not collect data about people, but should try "to learn from people, to be taught by them" (p. 4), and to capture perspectives as accurately as possible thus preserving the multiple "truths." In light of the four questions used to frame the approach to the multicultural course and resulting study, the narrative inquiry method outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) was employed by the researcher as a means of systematic inquiry into meaning present in the multiple forms of data including meta-comment papers, audio recordings of classroom discussion sessions, and reflective and interactive meta-comment journal entries recorded by the practicing teachers with regard to sociocultural topics, issues, and trends. The data provided authentic views of experiences and stories created by the teacher participants for means of self-analysis and enabled the inquirer to analyze their thoughts and actions in relation to the sociocultural topics, issues, and trends presented in class and contained in readings.

The Process of Exploration of Sociocultural Issues in Education – Student Responses and Results

The multiple forms of collected data provided a personal view of experience and story created by the participants. Guided by the four questions used to frame the study, participants looked into their own lives and the lives of others using personal interviews with family members and others, research focusing on different culture groups, guided readings including a set of autobiographical literature titles focusing on different culture groups including short stories and novels, reflective and interactive meta-comment journal entries, reaction papers, discussion and dialoging, selected videos, web site exercises, and a culminating meta-comment paper written using reflective journal entries recorded over the course of the semester as data to inform this culminating essay. With the authors' permission, I have included two representative "culminating essays" written by said class participants as Appendices A and B. In addition, the reflective "process" journals were used as "field texts" by the inquirer for insight into concerns, feelings, perceptions, and needs of practicing educators in particular as well people in general struggling to make their way in an increasingly diverse society. The inquirer sought to follow an empirical approach in order to see how these particular students in this particular class interpreted their worlds, and how the inquirer could, in turn interpret their interpretations (Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Shank, 2002). These multiple forms of data were analyzed and interpreted by the inquirer for meaning and social significance in relation to the four research questions used to drive the study (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Three distinct patterns of order cutting across various aspects of the data became recognizable to the inquirer and were used to characterize different segments of data identified by the inquirer as **"categories of meaning"** or **"themes"** (Shank, 2002). The inquirer labeled these three categories of meaning or themes as **Category One, "This is me with my own world view," Category Two, "I am not sure, but maybe there are multiple views of the world that are worth noting and validating; there might be a new me emerging," and Category Three, "I am sure; multiple views of the world do exist, and there is a new me emerging."**

Question One "How do people relate to others from diverse populations and what are the main concerns facing people across the mid-south," and **Question Two**, "How do practicing teachers relate to students from diverse populations and what are the main concerns facing teachers across the mid-south," at first yielded reflections, discussion, and personal meanings associated with the **Category One of Meaning** labeled, "This is me with my own world view." In general, in **Category One of Meaning**, "This is me with my own world view" the participants shared life histories and experiences emerging from a primarily intuitive base, which was basically monocultural, ethnocentric, and pictured reality in one dimension from one perspective using their own view as the norm. Theoretically, since none of the students had taken a multicultural course, they all started from this base point although each was in a different place on the continuum regarding particular perspectives as a result of their own backgrounds and experiences. In initial journal entries, class members responded to issues, discussions, and readings related to **Questions One** and **Two**. They recorded autobiographical information in their journals sharing their own particular view of diversity regarding what diversity meant to them, whether or not they thought aspects of diversity impacted their lives and classrooms, and whether or not these aspects of diversity should be taken into account as they planned instruction. In initial journal entries, many participants recorded entries and engaged in discussions in which they (1) indicated there was only one view of diversity, which was the one they held, (2) evidenced no desire to change and (3) were unwilling or unable to look at issues from a different perspective than the one they held as a result of their life experiences. As time progressed and readings and discussions were expanded upon, tolerance and acceptance as evidenced through discussion of and writings reflecting upon various topics and/or issues relating to diversity emerged for some but did not emerge for others. As evidenced in the data collected by the inquirer, a small number of class members' responses stayed thematically within **Category One of Meaning** labeled as "This is me with my own world view" throughout the semester and were steadfastly

resistant to change. One specific comment supporting this observation was recorded in a final journal entry and used by the respondent as a direct quote for emphasis in that respondent's meta-comment paper. The comment noted, "You can take the Black out of the ghetto, but you can't take the ghetto out of the Black."

At a later date though, **Questions One** and **Two**, with the inclusion of **Question Three**, "After research, guided readings, other class-related activities, and reading and discussion of a set of literature titles focusing on different culture groups, would teachers be able to view their 'classroom' world and the world in general through a lens of multiple perspectives," produced different types of responses from participants in discussion and reflective journal writing. This emerging **Category Two of Meaning** labeled, "I am not sure, but maybe there are multiple views of the world that are worth noting and validating; there might be a new me emerging," presented categorical responses seemingly more educated, better informed, less biased, and with a widened perspective view of various life histories and experiences, which changed these histories and experiences in the eyes of some participants. Participants' responses in **Category Two** indicated willingness to examine issues from a different perspective than the perspective they had previously held upon entering the multicultural class. Tolerance of diversity and curiosity relating to diversity issues and topics emerged through discussion and reflective writings. For example, respondents made numerous reflective commentaries noting an awakening in their minds of awareness of the existence of "white privilege" and how it impacted their lives and the lives of others although they indicated they had not ever thought about this concept before and had just accepted some things as they were without question. For example, one entry included a listing of "white privileges" heretofore unrecognized such as "being able to see a majority of others of your race in the university setting, being able to move in to any neighborhood and expect that your neighbors will not dislike you based on race," and so on with the listings. From these entries is followed that many recorded their surprise as they accepted and dealt with the fact that institutional racism can exist even if personal racism is not present and one might unconsciously participate in "institutional racism." In one journal entry a student wrote, "Oh, my God, I believe in equality; I just don't practice it yet," as she realized she belonged to certain organizations and frequented certain places of business that seemed, in light of her new way of thinking, to be promoting "institutional racism."

Finally, in response to **Question Four**, "Would the interactions, activities, reflections, dialoging, and discussions assist teachers in better meeting the needs of their own diverse student populations in particular and their society in general?", some students' reflections were broadened to include multiple perspectives and promises of social action as evidenced in their journals and meta-comment papers. These types of responses formed **Category Three of Meaning** labeled, "I am sure; multiple views of the world do exist, and there is a new me emerging." **Category Three** responses presented a shift in view or widening of perspective with relation to certain societal and historical happenings leaving room for celebration of differences rather than mere tolerance of diversity or curiosity regarding diversity. Voices emerged through discussion and in reflective writing entries indicating an eagerness to change from a viewpoint of "I believe in equality, but I just don't practice it" to "I believe in equality, and I practice it." Metaphorically speaking, one student described her journey over the course of the semester as a peeling of an onion, with layer after layer waiting to be peeled away, in a seemingly unending fashion. Many reflective entries made by respondents noted life experiences that had occurred in the past and would be handled differently in the future if the occasion presented itself with regard to issues now looked upon differently. For example, one student in particular noted the use of Native American mascots for sports teams and expressed understanding for Native Americans that protested the use of "Big Chief" and tomahawks being used as logos and symbols by sports teams. He wondered if society would be as tolerant of Aunt Jemima-like figures or black-faced, white-mouthed mascots for teams as it seemed to be tolerant of the use of Native American figures and motifs that to him now seemed to be used in a disrespectful and demeaning manner. Furthermore, he decided to retire his sports garb with the mascots he now found

offensive to the back of his closet. He noted that at a later date he might decide to "really get rid of the stuff, but for now it is in the back of the closet."

The Process of Exploration of Sociocultural Issues in Education – Implications for Teachers

Multicultural education is a major responsibility of all educators, and professional responsibilities include expertise in multicultural content, instructional techniques, and the ability to work with learners from different cultural backgrounds so that teaching styles and strategies more effectively meet the needs of children and adolescents from differing cultures (Banks, 2002; Nieto, 2000). This study examined multiple forms of data gathered from primarily Caucasian practicing teachers enrolled in a Master's level multicultural education course at a mid-south university. The course content explored sociocultural topics, issues, and trends. As a result of reflective and interactive meta-comment journal entries, interactive classroom discussion, and meta-comment reflective essay writing, these practicing teachers created a forum in which they could engage in reflective, collaborative dialog with regard to sociocultural readings, topics, issues, and trends. Insights emerged regarding the challenges, complexities, uncertainties, and responsibilities of teaching from a multicultural perspective. These insights, as recorded by the participants themselves in their journals and essays and evidenced in their discussions, hopefully will enable these teachers to fulfill more effectively their professional responsibilities as multicultural educators within the contexts of their classrooms and better assist their students as they more effectively address the needs of learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition, data gathered during this study will guide the multicultural course instructor regarding curriculum revision for the multicultural course at the university level offered to practicing teachers.

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APPENDIX A
Gloria Morrissey, Student A
Metacomment Paper
Dr. Young

Reflections from the Ivory Tower

I was looking forward to my class in cultural diversity with the all the confidence of a lifelong liberal. Being part Hispanic and having grown up in Miami, I knew myself to be open-minded, accepting and forward-thinking. While I was unsure what to expect from the class, I expected myself to be the model student. Although, surely I had nothing to learn since I was already in a state of grace due to my liberal stance, I fully expected to be a shining example of diversity in thought and deed. It was with this self-congratulatory attitude that I approached the class.

As a class, we were asked to keep journals to document our intellectual and emotional progress throughout the semester. We were also assigned to groups with reading material that pertained to given cultural groups; Anglo-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian-Americans, African-Americans, Native Americans, and Jewish-Americans. My confidence grew. I had grown up in a heavily Hispanic and Jewish community; my children numbered many Asians among their friends, and I had friends and acquaintances from my work and community activities that were African-American. I had a lot to say about the positive and felicitous relationships that I had with all ethnic minorities. In fact, I felt a certain moral superiority to many of my classmates who had led lives so much more provincial and isolated than mine. And what of the journal? How could I document progress when I felt that I had already arrived?

My first shock came with the reading of the article, "White Privilege," by Peggy McIntosh. This article raised questions for me that I have never considered before. I realized that I was raised as a white child, with all the privileges conferred by that status. I never even thought of myself as Hispanic until I came to the South from Miami, Florida. Suddenly, people noticed something. In pre-tanning bed Nashville of 1968, perhaps I was browner or my features were a little different. At any rate, I was asked what I was by the bold and curious. I did not find this threatening at the time as I had been firmly rooted as a white person for eighteen years, and I functioned as a person of privilege. Peggy McIntosh's article made me revisit the past and consider that there may have been subtle moments of discrimination that I was unable to identify as discrimination. For example, I realized as I looked back, that in four years of college, only one man asked me out for a date, and I subsequently, although briefly, was married to him. His mother was bitterly opposed. On the occasion of my bridal shower, I overheard her explaining my coloring to her lady friends. At the time, I was amused. In retrospect, I realize she must have been trying to convince her friends that her son was not marrying a mulatta.

More importantly, the article made me re-examine all the subtle ways that people who were more markedly "other" than me experienced discrimination. In my mind I began collecting years of anecdotes from my friends, my children, their friends and began to look at them in a new way. I began to realize that what I took to be isolated incidents, shared in a moment of candor, probably represented a pattern of maltreatment and ostracization that I had never truly acknowledged.

Class discussions contributed to my insights. Whether I considered remarks and contributions from my fellows enlightened or unenlightened, nothing left me unmoved. I felt as though my carefully constructed mental worldview was being destroyed, much the way the discovery that the Earth was not center of the universe, or even its own solar system had repercussions beyond science into philosophy, religion and human self-concept.

I was entering a period of deconstruction. The fact that I had discovered something very unpleasant about myself; that I had been largely functioning as a member of a privileged class;

forced me to review my entire belief system. To make this journey it was necessary for me to be utterly ruthless with myself about who I was and where I came from.

I had the sense that I was standing before a shelf of trinkets and memorabilia that I had had all my life, picking each one up, and looking at it, anew, in a new unit of time. This examination took time, and I devoted a lot of time to it while driving, walking, falling asleep. I was consumed by examining illusion and reality.

So it was that I needed the journal after all. It was a place to pin ideas and thoughts that were often evanescent as moths, and it was a place to retrace my steps and plan my journey.

I confronted many things during this time. I asked myself how often the prejudices of my parents appeared as ghosts at the edges of my consciousness. Sometimes, there were whispers. Maybe, after all, blacks just don't want to take advantage of the opportunities they've been given. Maybe I'll hire a Jewish lawyer to get more child support from my ex-husband. Maybe, white people are more on the ball; look at all they've accomplished.

My work on Anglo-Americans took me into more uncharted territory. Most significant for me was the discovery that the idea of "race" is a historically recent construct and it is a construct that was designed to confer power on the whites. I already knew that ethnic groups other than whites were underrepresented in literature books, in history texts, and in management positions in the workplace. In my new frame of mind, the entire social and political climate began to feel like a conspiracy designed to preserve white power. I began to see events like "Black History Month" and the presence of token Asian-American and African-American co-anchors as sops. As an unwitting co-conspirator I began to feel a great deal of guilt. As I read The Education of a WASP by Lois Staley, I began to contrast her commitment to action with my own stagnant intellectual liberalism. I found that I was using a microscope and analyzing every day events in light of my new insights. I even began to evaluate my own actions and behaviors. I began to wonder, justifiably in some cases, if rather than being truly egalitarian, if I was often merely being benignly patronizing.

This process was disturbing and painful. This kind of self-critical exploration is uncomfortable and absolutely necessary in order to make the transition from theoretical liberalism to active commitment. I never marched in the 60's, or registered black voters or performed any action to implement my beliefs. The smugness with which I had entered this class turned to a vague discomfort with my lack of involvement.

What can I do that will make a difference? As an educator, I hold a special power to make a difference where it really matters: in the minds of the young and impressionable. Upon entering my first classroom, I found that the insights, so painfully won during the course, now guided my every action. While I explained the importance of Standard English, I honored the individual dialects of my students and discussed the history of their dialects. I juxtaposed M.L. King's grammatically excellent "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" with Sojourner Truth's Non Standard English "Ain't I a Woman."

A course on cultural diversity should not merely be an adjunct to the education of teachers; it should be a central discipline. The personal journey I have undertaken should be basic training for any educator. Truly understanding cultural diversity means recognizing people as individuals in and out of the context of their culture. It means bringing the theoretical in to real world. It means coming down from the ivory tower to teach.

APPENDIX B

Student B
Metacomment Essay
Dr. Young
Middle Tennessee State University

REFLECTIONS FROM A WASP

Diversity. Tolerance. Multiculturalism. Acceptance. These four words are used numerous times in today's classrooms. We want our students to know these words and understand their meanings. I would argue that something more important students should read about is privilege. If a student understands privilege and what it means to be privileged, he or she will be able to understand diversity, tolerance, multiculturalism and acceptance more clearly. I am not sure at what point we should introduce this concept of privilege, maybe it should be a concept we learn in high school or college. I did not learn about the concept until this semester, my first as a graduate student. I have seen humility, but have never experienced it as much as I did once I realized I am part of a privileged race. The concept of being privileged was the one of the most enlightening experiences during the class. From my childhood through my undergraduate experience, I have never considered myself privileged.

An Ignorant Past

I can very easily describe myself as a typical White Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP). I was born in Jackson, Mississippi, at Baptist Memorial Hospital on February 23, 1978. My parents divorced by age three and by age six my mother had remarried. Those three years in-between were spent in a trailer park outside of Jackson. My mom was a single parent with three mouths to feed, which included my newly born sister and the two of us. The idea of going to McDonald's for dinner was a once-a-month concept. We ate more tuna fish that I care to remember, but we always had our vegetables. I hardly think of myself during these years as privileged.

Once my mother remarried to a successful businessman, we moved into an all white neighborhood, Brookliegh Hills. I then started attending Oak Forest Elementary, a predominantly white public school with white teachers and a white administration. I can vaguely remember a few black students. We began each morning with the pledge of allegiance, prayer and scripture followed with a day of pure white teaching. When my parents caught wind of blacks moving into an apartment complex near our neighborhood, it was time to move. My parents built a home at Lake Dockery Estates in Byram, Mississippi, a very rural white area right outside Jackson. I began attending Byram High School, which included sixth through the twelfth grade. During my sixth grade year at Byram, a riot broke out soon after Terry High School, a predominantly black high school, was integrated with Byram High School, a predominantly white high school.

Racial integration of schools is an event that happened during the sixties and I am sure most of the world would assume that by the nineties racial tension in Mississippi would be better. After personally witnessing shoot-outs between blacks and whites, I can assure you they weren't. It was a very trying time for Byram High; I do not remember any education or preparation for either school regarding the integration. It appeared as though school administrators acted upon trial by fire. I had not chosen the places where we lived nor the schools I attended. I was a typical WASP as I have said; totally unknowing of the white world I was growing up in until I was placed in a town where I had to assimilate.

Soon after the riots, we were relocated to San Antonio, Texas. Due to President Bush's North American Free Trade Agreement, my father's company decided to move to Laredo, Texas,

in search for cheaper labor. It was 1991, I was thirteen and had just finished seventh grade when we moved. I did not know much about Texas; I had hardly ever left Mississippi. The culture shock would be the best thing for me, although I would not realize this until much later in life. I was introduced to a new culture, Mexican. I don't even think I knew there were Mexicans until we reached San Antonio. I can't really remember ever seeing any other cultures besides whites and African Americans. I did not assimilate very well at all. After two years, I moved back to Mississippi to live with my natural father. I did not want to have any thing to do with Texas or the Mexican culture.

In 1996, I began attending Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. The delta is rich with plantations and rich with despair. Despair over issues from the past such as slavery and over terrible issues with poverty. A person visiting Delta State would find classrooms, dorms and the cafeteria segregated by choice. It was not much different from high school. The blacks sat on one side and the whites on the other. Even the places where students hung out around campus were segregated. I can't recall a single interracial couple at the university. It is easy to look back and know that I never thought of myself as a racist. I thought I tolerated all cultures. I just knew I did not necessarily want to be around other races besides whites except for a few people. I had a couple of black friends at Delta State. I don't recall peeling many layers of the race "onion" with any of them, but we were friends or I should say acquaintances.

In 1999, I transferred to Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. I moved into a new apartment on campus with three total strangers. The person I shared a bathroom with was black. I was very taken back that I was living with a black person, so was my black roommate. It would be the beginning of a very trying relationship. I don't think he and I really ever became friends, but we most defiantly learned a great deal from one another. At this time I also meet David. He became my very best friend. David was gay and quickly pointed out my close mindedness and racist thoughts. I felt it was wrong that the university would even consider placing two different races in a dorm room or apartment. I did not like being made to feel so uncomfortable. It was by far the most important discomfort I would face for some time to come.

Ignorance Erased

The next discomfort would happen during this semester, Fall 2001. We were given an article titled "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh. I quickly remembered my childhood and thought surly what I experienced, until my mom remarried, was not a privileged situation. I was though, because I was a white male. I had never realized all the doors that were probably opened for me because of my skin color and also, because I am a man. It pained me to know that everyone was not on an equal playing ground. I had always assumed that as long as someone worked hard, they could achieve anything in life. I thought I had experienced this concept, but I was ignorant to the fact that I had help…my whiteness and my maleness were great possessions to have in my corner. Does this mean I am a bad person because up until this point I had done nothing to try and make things better? Does this mean I am a racist because of issues I had no control over…my skin color and my sex?

I felt despair and pain for many days after reading the article. I did not understand how such a world could exist and how could I have been brought up to act as such a "Pollyanna". Unfortunately, this would not be the last discomfort for the year. A little further into the semester, Dr. Young showed the class a film "Blue Eyes." A teacher had developed a program for showing students what it was like to be privileged in white society. It was very disturbing. I again felt shame for being a white male in this society.

A third striking event took place during our group presentations. One of the groups presented the treatment of American Indians in today's society. It was obvious that I was a victim of the media. It had never bothered me before of our portrayal of Indians as being such savage, vicious creatures. In movies they were always half clothed and appeared to be such an uncivilized people. I always thought that what we did to them was better than what they had previously been used to. I was very wrong. We (WASPs) participated in the ethnic cleansing of an entire culture because it did not meet our standard way of life.

All of these events were a wake up call. I could tell that I must do my part in order to help stop this insanity. I know I cannot solve the world's problems, but I can do my part to try and not be a part of institutional racism. As a higher education administrator, it will be my duty to make sure my staff is practicing understanding with all students. It is my duty to ensure that each student is helped no matter the origin of his/her ethnicity, color of skin or sexual preference. It is my duty to pass on the privilege article in hope that whites will become understanding and the ignorance will be lifted.

At times I am very aggravated that African Americans and other minorities appear to get free rides to college and more opportunities placed in their laps on silver trays. The anger is derived from the fact that I do not see all the great opportunities placed in my lap due to my whiteness and maleness. It seems to be overlooked because we do no point out our privileges. We (WASPs) are too busy making sure we hold on to our white power. It is interesting that during the sixties, African Americans had to shout out "Black Power" in order to be heard. We have always had the privilege that our power was understood. It was not necessary to shout it out across the nation.

I do not know what is in store for whites or myself. It is obvious that very soon, whites will not hold the majority of the population. It will be interesting to see if they still hold the majority of control over the nation in regards to governmental administration. I hope that as more of my generation's eyes are opened to institutional racism, we become a generation that takes lead of a country with enough understanding and humanity to see people and not color, sex or sexual orientation. I think that then, we will be a true democratic society with a government for the people and not for the white people.

A Better Tomorrow

It is hardly difficult to think of ways in which I can make differences in society for a better tomorrow. Although I do not teach, I still am still a part of higher education and have a stake in making sure that I am not aiding in passing down stereotypes, which oppress people. I know that because I was enlightened to how we are treating American Indians in this country I will no longer be supporting any type of athletic team, which calls themselves the "Chiefs" or "Braves" and has a savage looking Indian as a mascot. I had always gone along with society in never thinking anything was wrong with whites practicing genocide on the American Indians, storing it away as if it never happened and finally, portraying their culture in the media as if they are some savage uncivilized race. We helped stop Hitler from wiping out the Jews, but who sailed over to stop us from almost wiping out an entire race of people who had loved and nurtured this land for hundreds of years before we (WASPs) arrived. The answer: no one.

I can also make a difference when selecting staff for employment. I will do my best to hire the best person and not let my personal bias persuade me into hiring a lesser-qualified candidate over someone who is better suited for the position. Our school does allow administrators to teach University 1010, which is becoming a required course in many colleges. I would like to be able to teach one of these classes and pass along what I have learned in this class through journaling, discussions and readings. We can all make a difference; I have chosen to take a stand and help to ensure a more multi-pluralistic society.

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